

VZCZCXRO4938

PP RUEHAG RUEHAST RUEHDA RUEHDF RUEHFL RUEHIK RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHLN  
RUEHLZ RUEHPOD RUEHROV RUEHSR RUEHVK RUEHYG  
DE RUEHBW #1020/01 2741314  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 301314Z SEP 08  
FM AMEMBASSY BELGRADE  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0477  
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE  
RHEHNS/NSC WASHDC  
RUZEJAA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK  
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BELGRADE 001020

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

E.O.12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SR](#) [KV](#)

SUBJECT: SERBIA: PRESIDENT TADIC SAYS KOSOVO'S PARTITION IS AN  
OPTION, IF ALL ELSE FAILS

Ref: A) Belgrade 337, B) 07 Belgrade 1411 C) 07 Belgrade 1328, D)  
Belgrade Highlights 9/22-9/26

Summary  
-----

1. (SBU) Serbian President Boris Tadic publicly stated on Monday that Kosovo's partition was an option, if all other options failed. His comments followed his lobbying efforts in New York where he publicly said all options were on the table, but where he did not mention partition. Although his top foreign policy advisor denied vehemently to us that the statement represented a policy shift, Tadic's answer to a question from a respected and persistent reporter may further demonstrate that Serbia's president believes that partition remains a viable option. End Summary.

Tadic Mentions Partition  
-----

2. (SBU) During a September 29 interview, President Tadic said he would consider Kosovo's partition if all other options failed. In response to a direct question about possible partition during a live interview with Zoran Stanojevic of Radio and Television Serbia (RTS), Tadic said dividing Kosovo at the moment "is not on the agenda," and that the Serbian government still hoped for a solution formulated upon the "greatest possible autonomy" for Kosovo within Serbia. After Stanojevic asked about partition a second time, Tadic answered, "I am ready to think about that option [partition] too if all previous options fail, and there are many, since there is still a lot of room to find a solution within the essential autonomy option," Tadic said. In the RTS interview, Tadic said that in an effort to find a solution to Kosovo "all initiatives are legitimate," and that anything would be better than the situation in which one side would lose everything. Tadic's reference to partition was the first time he publicly stated this as an option. (Comment: Despite working for the state run media outlet RTS, Stanojevic is a BBC-trained journalist with a reputation for professionalism and asking tough questions. End Comment.)

Tadic's Mentions All Options in New York  
-----

3. (SBU) Stanojevic was following up on comments that Tadic made in New York. While there to lobby for Serbia's International Court of Justice initiative (Ref D), Tadic told RTS on September 25 that all options for Kosovo were on the table. He said that "when...we sit again at the negotiating table, we will discuss all possible options. All options are legitimate and better than this one where one side is losing all and the other side gets everything." When pressed on partition at that time, Tadic stated that it was "too early to raise that question," and "that we should not cross bridges before we reach them."

4. (SBU) Serbian media quickly speculated whether Tadic's comments inferred partition. Local pro-government newspaper Danas ran a

September 27 article entitled "All Options Are Open," noting that Tadic's comments did not exclude partition. The article quoted Minister for Kosovo Goran Bogdanovic and State Secretary Oliver Ivanovic as saying that there had been no change in Serbia's policy. Bogdanovic added, however, that Tadic had not mentioned partition because "to do so would be to put all your cards on the table" before possible negotiations.

#### President's Office Downplays Comments

-----

¶5. (SBU) Jovan Ratkovic, Tadic's top foreign policy advisor, emphasized to us on September 30 that Tadic's comments did not represent a change in policy. Ratkovic said that he had briefed Tadic before the interview and could confirm that there was no plan to raise the idea of partition during the interview. It would not be in Serbia's interest to generate additional public discussion of Kosovo's status at a time when the GOS was working to take it off the domestic political agenda through the ICJ referral process, Ratkovic stressed. He said that Tadic had merely responded to a direct question from the journalist in the simplest way possible.

¶6. (SBU) When asked what Tadic meant when he said in New York that "all options" were on the table, Ratkovic said that Tadic was trying to emphasize Serbia's openness to any constructive compromise solution; he had not used the word partition nor had it in mind. In response to a similar question about Tadic and FM Jeremic's statements that the ultimate goal of the ICJ process was new status negotiations on Kosovo, Jovanovic said that Belgrade's hope is to establish direct talks with Pristina: in a first phase to resolve non-status issues such as refugees, missing persons, infrastructure, trade, and energy; and in a second phase, possibly to achieve agreement on status. Ratkovic stressed that these would be

BELGRADE 00001020 002 OF 002

bilateral discussions; "we can't keep pretending that we live on two different planets...it's weird and bad for both sides that we don't have even backchannel contacts."

#### Is Partition Part of the Strategy?

-----

¶7. (SBU) Some informed observers believe that Tadic's public mentioning of partition as a distant, but possible option, could resurrect the option within Serbia's new government. Jelena Milic, Director for the Center for Euro Atlantic Studies in Belgrade (a pro-NATO, left of center think tank) told us on September 29 that she believed Tadic would accept Kosovo's partition. According to Milic, Tadic is hoping that the ICJ will rule that Kosovo's declaration of independence contravened international law. That, she believes, would open the way for the Government of Serbia to push for the resumption of talks wherein the Government of Serbia would accept partition. She said that she believes this has been Tadic's goal all along.

#### Comment

-----

¶8. (SBU) Tadic's statements regarding partition as a last resort are important, although the significance is not yet completely clear. Tadic may have decided to state outright a goal that many believe he has long held and may have been emboldened by the prospect of a successful ICJ vote in the UNGA on October 8. If so, this is all the more reason to prepare a counter-argument in the ICJ to Serbia's assertion that Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence was illegal. Tadic's statements illustrate the amnesia rampant in Serbia about the appalling events leading up to the NATO bombing and subsequent UN supervision of Kosovo. He needs to be reminded on as many fronts as necessary that the question of status is settled, that he was elected on a pro-European platform, and that he should focus on taking steps that would help, rather than hurt, Serbia's chances of joining the EU. End Comment.

MUNTER